

Ready Graduate Indicator in Accountability (2017-18)

Frequently Asked Questions

One of the new requirements included in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) for school and district accountability is an “indicator of school quality and student success.” This indicator is meant to capture evidence of student performance beyond academic proficiency to represent a holistic, well-rounded education. Within this indicator, Tennessee is focusing on two key areas: **opportunity** and **readiness**. Tennessee’s goal in developing this indicator in accountability is to give a measure of a school’s ability to influence a student’s probability of success—both in a student’s opportunity to learn, and the result of that student’s pathway through K–12 education.

Tennessee has approached ESSA’s indicator of school quality and student success with two specific proposed indicators: (1) the **Ready Graduate**, which measures the percentage of students who are earning a diploma from a Tennessee high school and who have met measures of success that increase their probability of seamlessly enrolling in postsecondary education and entering the workplace or the military; and (2) the **Chronically Absent** indicator, which measures chronic absenteeism and the percentage of students who are in school and experiencing instruction on a regular basis. These two indicators reflect Tennessee’s two focus areas, opportunity and readiness.

The Ready Graduate Indicator (for high schools)

As proposed in Tennessee’s ESSA state plan, the *Ready Graduate* indicator would be calculated as follows:

- Graduation rate multiplied by the percentage of students who are *Ready Graduates*. A Ready Graduate meets one of the following criteria (students can only be “counted” once):
 - score a **21 or higher on the ACT**; OR
 - complete **four early postsecondary opportunities (EPSOs)**; OR
 - **complete two EPSOs + earn an industry certification (on a CTE pathway leading to a credential)**; OR
 - complete **2 EPSOs + score a designated score TBD** on the **Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) Armed Forces Qualifying Test (AFQT)**.

*This metric defines four “checks” for evidence that graduates have **demonstrated** postsecondary and workforce readiness.*

Frequently Asked Questions

Because the *Ready Graduate* indicator is a completely new measure of student and school success, we have received many questions from school and district staff about how the new indicator will be evaluated. While the business rules for our new accountability system have not yet been finalized, there are several questions about the intent of the indicator we can answer now. We anticipate finalizing business rules prior to the start of the new school year.

1. Are the measures outlined in the Ready Graduate indicator new graduation requirements?

No. The state plan aims to use EPSOs as an indicator for student readiness for postsecondary. The ready graduate indicator is a new part of the **accountability** model that points to Tennessee's vision for postsecondary and career readiness while addressing one of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requirements. There are four ways in which students can demonstrate readiness: scoring 21 or higher on ACT, OR completing four EPSOs, OR completing 2 EPSOs and earning an industry certification, OR earning a state-designated passing score on the ASVAB—none of which are required for high school graduation. For additional information regarding Tennessee Succeeds and the associated ESSA plan, click ([here](#)).

2. What EPSOs are available?

Tennessee has one of the most robust portfolios of recognized and promoted EPSOs of any state in the nation. The eight opportunities currently promoted include:

- [Dual Enrollment](#)
- [Local Dual Credit](#)
- [Statewide Dual Credit](#)
- [Advanced Placement \(AP\)](#)
- [Cambridge International Examinations \(CIE\)](#)
- [International Baccalaureate \(IB\)](#)
- [College Level Examination Program \(CLEP\)](#)
- [Industry Certifications](#)

3. If a student is following a CTE program of study and planning on earning a department-promoted industry certification, do the two EPSOs have to be within the CTE program of study?

No. If a student is progressing through a program of study and planning on earning an industry certification, the two EPSOs can come from within the CTE program of study, but they could also be from general education courses. For example, a student could be taking courses within the *Office Management* program of study. The student could sit for the **Microsoft Office Specialist exam**, take the **statewide dual credit statistics** course to meet her/his fourth year math requirement, and a **dual enrollment Spanish** course in order to meet this indicator.

4. Does a student have to complete a program of study to meet one of the Ready Graduate indicator requirements of two EPSOs and an industry certification?

No. There is no requirement in ESSA or our proposed state accountability system that a student must complete a CTE program of study. That being said, it is strongly recommended that all students who are planning on sitting for department-promoted industry certifications take the appropriately aligned coursework within their identified CTE programs of study in order to increase student preparation and pass rates.

5. What industry certifications will count toward the Ready Graduate indicator?

Only industry certifications promoted by the department will count toward the Ready Graduate indicator. The list of department- promoted industry certifications can be found on the [CTE web page](#).

This does not prohibit a student from sitting for certifications which do not appear on the department-promoted industry certification list, but these would not be included in the Ready Graduate indicator. The department will conduct an annual review of industry certifications as a part of the program of study justification process and will release the list of promoted industry certifications annually. This list will be released in the early fall for the following school year (example: released October 2017 for 2018-19 school year).

6. *Can districts request an industry certification to be added to the list of promoted industry certifications?*

Yes. Districts are encouraged to submit industry certifications they believe should be a part of the promoted industry certification list. The department will include these certifications in their annual review process and will review them to ensure they meet the required criteria:

- Industry recognized and valued
- Aligned to CTE course and/or program of study (technical skills)
- Transference to postsecondary institution
- Transference to high quality employment

Please send all industry certification recommendations to Candi.Norwood@tn.gov. Certification recommendations will need to be **received by June 1, 2017** to be considered for the 2018-19 school year. Recommendations received after June 1, 2017, will be placed on a list to review for 2019-20.

7. *Do students have to earn credit in an EPSO to meet the Ready Graduate indicator?*

No. Based on our 2015 graduating cohort, the department determined that students who completed at least four EPSOs had a 50 percent chance of scoring at least a 21 on the ACT. However, less than 17 percent of students in that cohort completed four or more EPSO credits. In fact, less than 40 percent completed even one or more EPSOs. Therefore, this requirement will initially be focused on increasing access to EPSOs. The criteria for 2017-18 will be based on student participating in and **completing both the course and any accompanying qualifying exam**, as applicable.

The exception to this is for CLEP and industry certifications in which the student would need to **earn** the credit to count. Industry certifications are not awarded without the passing of all required exams, and CLEP is only awarded based on a student passing an exam.

8. *The third pathway in the Ready Graduate indicator (two EPSOs and an industry certification) is the CTE path, right?*

No. Though students would need CTE courses within aligned programs of study to be more successful in earning an industry certification, many CTE programs of study do not have an aligned industry certification. Students progressing through these programs of study would need to either meet the indicator of a 21 on the ACT or earn four EPSOs to count toward the Ready Graduate indicator. The four EPSOs can come from a combination of general education and CTE courses.

9. *I do not have a TCAT or community college close by for my students to attend. How can I provide for dual enrollment courses?*

Dual enrollment is not the only EPSO. Districts are encouraged to offer a portfolio of EPSOs to ensure students have access to rigorous courses and opportunities.

- In many instances, qualifications for faculty members at the TCAT are the same as occupational license requirements for CTE teachers. This allows CTE teachers to be able to serve as adjunct faculty members of the TCAT and teach postsecondary courses at the high school to increase the availability of CTE dual enrollment courses for students.
- Community colleges offer a variety of online courses through the TN eCampus system (formerly Tennessee Regents Online Degree Program). Districts can engage in virtual courses and distance learning as well to be able to take advantage of dual enrollment community college offerings.
- Some teachers will also meet the requirements to serve as adjunct faculty members for community colleges, and districts can utilize this to increase access to dual enrollment courses as well.

Please note that the physical location of the class does not affect the dual enrollment status.

10. *How do I build an EPSO portfolio in my district?*

Districts are strongly encouraged to offer three to four different types of EPSOs. In providing a robust portfolio of EPSOs, districts will better be able to meet the needs of their students and expand the opportunities for students to obtain four EPSOs. Seeking relationships with regional TCATs, community colleges, and four-year institutions will assist districts in thinking through the different types of EPSOs they can offer. Postsecondary institutions accept many different forms of prior learning assessments (including but not limited to CLEP, statewide dual credit, local dual credit, industry certifications, AP, and International Baccalaureate). In addition, districts should think through the mediums available for students to participate in EPSOs. Virtual courses and distance learning are options which would expand the number of courses available to students when course enrollment numbers may be low.

11. *Should I consider CLEP? It is just for general education courses?*

CLEP is a readily available, often more economical option for adding additional EPSOs to your portfolio and is not just for general education courses. There are several more specialized CTE courses such as *Financial Accounting, Information Systems and Computer Applications, Principles of Management, and Principles of Marketing*. Visit <https://clep.collegeboard.org/> for additional information on CLEP exams, preparation, and cost.

12. *Are students with IEPs included in the Ready Graduate indicator?*

Yes, students who graduated on time with a **regular education diploma** are included, even if they were on an individual education program (IEP) at any time during their K–12 education. Students who are not on track to graduate within four years, or who have received/are planning to receive an occupational diploma or the special education diploma are not included.

We encourage you to challenge all of your students to complete early postsecondary opportunities, even if they have a disability. All students who graduate with a regular high school diploma in Tennessee

have a right to be ready for postsecondary and career after graduation. The pathways of the ready graduate indicator are a great way to gauge this readiness and should be the goal of all students.

13. *Will there be an increase in the list of promoted industry certifications so that there is an industry certification for every CTE program of study?*

Though we anticipate releasing an annual list of promoted industry certifications, we do not foresee a time where every program of study has an industry certification. Many of our programs of study lead directly into a two-year or four-year degree and do not have an industry certification around which industry would agree upon serving as an overall understanding of the content. We encourage districts with students in these programs to consider conversations with students early on to talk about the EPSOs they may be seeking to assist them in building out their EPSO portfolio to transition seamlessly into their postsecondary program. This can be a part of the students' seventh and tenth grade plan.

14. *I am in an economically disadvantaged community, and several of the EPSOs carry a cost to obtain. How are my students supposed to afford to take EPSOs?*

Because we understand this is a barrier for many students, the state has many opportunities to offset the costs of EPSOs for students. See the funding chart below.

15. *What will be the cut score on the ASVAB?*

The department is working with the Department of Defense to secure access to ASVAB data for all Tennessee students who participate in the exam. The Department of Defense recommended that Tennessee set a cut score criteria that reflects state goals, rather than relying solely upon military entrance requirements.

- The department wants to ensure the ASVAB cut score used for the Ready Graduate criteria is rigorous and aligned to the other three "checks."
- The department will conduct a concordance study using ASVAB and ACT data to establish the appropriate cut score.

Available Funding Options

Early Postsecondary Opportunity	Typical Associated Costs	Available Funding Options
Advanced Placement (AP)	Required Costs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student exam fees Potential (not required): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher training • Purchase of materials or curriculum supplements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State Exam Fee Assistance Pilot • Federal Grants: ESSA Title IV Block Grant (TBD), Title I • Perkins Basic (only when course is within a program of study) • College Board economically disadvantaged fee waivers • Local Chamber of Commerce or industry partnership
Cambridge International Exams (CIE)	Required Costs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student exam fees Potential (not required): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher training • Purchase of materials or curriculum supplements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State Exam Fee Assistance Pilot • Federal Grants: ESSA Title IV Block Grant (TBD), Title I • Perkins Basic (only when course is within a program of study) • College Board economically disadvantaged fee waivers • Local Chamber of Commerce or industry partnership
CLEP Exam	Required Costs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student exam fee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perkins Basic (only when course is within a program of study)
Dual Enrollment	Required Costs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tuition cost • Mandatory fees Potential Costs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course-specific fees • Textbooks or other materials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dual Enrollment Grant • Perkins Basic (only when course is within a program of study) • Scholarships/gap costs covered by some institutions
International Baccalaureate (IB)	Required Costs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application and/or teacher training costs to become an IB World School • Student exam fees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State Exam Fee Assistance Pilot • Federal Grants: ESSA Title IV Block Grant (TBD), Title I • Perkins Basic (only when course is within a program of study) • College Board economically disadvantaged fee waivers • Local Chamber of Commerce or industry partnership
Local Dual Credit	Required Costs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standard fee of \$25 across all community colleges 	

Statewide Dual Credit	Required Costs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Required teacher training travel costs • Student exam fees (covered by department of education) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exam costs fully covered by Tennessee Department of Education
Industry Certification	Required Costs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student exam fee • Possible licensure application fee • Possible professional organization registration fee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perkins Basic • Perkins Reserve Grant